



Queen Anne Cobblestone

The Newsletter of the Queen Anne Historical Society

September 2014

Next Meeting: September 25 at 1926 Queen Anne Ave. N

By Michael Herschensohn, PhD.

A panel discussion about ways to protect the historic fabric of our two threatened commercial districts is the focus of the September 25 meeting, set for 7 p.m. at 1926 Queen Anne Ave. N.

Among the panelists is Mark Huppert, of the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Green Lab, which just published a significant report entitled *OlderSmallerBetter*. He will be joined by David Hewitt of Hewitt Architects, which is doing a large high-rise building in the Pike-Pine Corridor that respects the historic scale and feeling of the early-20th-century

buildings already on the site. Eugenia Woo, director of Preservation Services at Historic Seattle, and Mary McCumber, a Queen Anne resident and longtime urban planner, environmentalist and early champion of the urban village concept, fill out the panel.

The society recognizes the successes of the 'urban village' concept, which has prevented suburban sprawl and preserved the single-family quality of the neighborhood. The village concept has not, however, protected the historic quality of our commercial zones. The Towne, Sweetbri-

ar, and Eden Hill developments on Queen Anne Avenue are good examples of how buildings accommodating multi-family housing meet the urban village challenge while removing almost all evidence of the neighborhood's historic scale and feel. Fortunately, the urban villages on the top of Queen Anne and in Uptown are not immutable planning tools.

The panel will explore options to protecting our historic commercial zones while encouraging density in Seattle's urban villages.

Preservation laws and helpful definitions

By Michael Herschensohn, PhD.

As the society begins a new program year and considers at its September 25 public meeting ways to protect the historic fabric of the commercial buildings that ring the hill and populate Uptown, a review of definitions and protection opportunities is useful. Before we examine ways our governments protect historic places, we'll define some general terms.

Landmark: In preservation terms, a stand-alone building that meets certain criteria as set out in enabling legislation.

Historic District: A cluster of buildings with geographic boundaries that taken together meet criteria similar to those for designating individual buildings. (Seattle has an exceptional historic theater district downtown where the buildings are not contiguous.) Established in New

Orleans in the early 1920s, the concept is called the *tout ensemble* in French, which translates roughly as *the collective value* a group of buildings. The Ballard Historic District along Ballard Avenue is an example of a city-designated historic district. Buildings in historic districts are often classed as contributing and non-contributing to the historic character of the district.



How can we protect contributing historic buildings like this one behind The Gilbert?

Facadism: The preservation of only the street-facing elevation of a historic building as part of a new development.

Seattle: City law allows for both individual landmarks and historic districts. The five criteria for designating buildings or districts are very rigid. A building must meet at

Issues of Queen Anne High School's annual publication, the *KUAY*, are available for purchase! Contact archivist Verna Ness at verna Ness@yahoo.com and choose from the selection of annuals from between 1922 and 1938.

CHECK OUR WEBSITE

We continue to improve our website (www.qahistory.org), including better organization of our historical database and images. Like us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter.

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least one of them. A volunteer board nominates landmarks or historic districts and recommends designation to the City Council and the mayor. The Landmarks Preservation Board or the board overseeing individual districts approves all changes to buildings. Guided by the staff of the Department of Neighborhood's Historic Preservation Program, the boards strictly adhere to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Historic Preservation. It is nearly impossible to demolish a building listed by the city.

Seattle's Urban Village: Urban Villages are areas identified in the city's Master Plan as places for dense settlement. There are different kinds of urban villages. Upper Queen Anne's village is limited to multi-family residential buildings.

Zoning Code: Since the early 1920s,

cities have controlled building heights, massing, and materials including plumbing and electrical systems, elevators, etc. The city is divided up according to the type of building allowed in each particular area.

Overlay District: Seattle permits overlays over the zoning code that can determine how new buildings are designed. In the Pike-Pine Overlay district historic facades were selected for preservation.

Washington State: The state maintains a register of historic buildings that is considered as part of the environmental review process. This simply means that the state must think twice before destroying historic structures when it builds roads or in the course of other major projects. Environmental review tends to offer little, if any, protection.

Federal Protections: The National Register of Historic Places was created in 1966 as part of the National Historic

Preservation Act signed by Lyndon Johnson. It is tied to the National Environmental Protection Act, so that any project requiring environmental review must evaluate the impact of the project on historic buildings or districts. The National Register works in concert with the Historic American Engineering Record, the Antiquities Act of 1906 and Richard Nixon's 1972 Executive Order 11593.

Nixon's Executive Order required assessing every federal building for its historic value and requires disposal of any historic building, listed on one of the registers of not, at no cost and with rigid covenants that protect the building in perpetuity. Federal buildings that meet historic standards can only be given to other governments. MOHA's new digs in the former Naval Armory is a great example. Executive Order 11593 explains why the City of Seattle will own and must preserve the building forever.



Historic Boston Street. Could this be our historic district?

President's Letter

By Michael Herschensohn, PhD.

As the summer draws to a close, the society is gearing up for an exciting year of programs you won't want to miss. The first meeting will focus on the theme of Queen Anne's multi-family housing, while the last one in May will celebrate the 20th anniversary of the publication of the society's history of Queen Anne, *Community on the Hill*.

In November, Mimi Sheridan, who wrote the book on Queen Anne multi-family dwellings and who has done significant work defining and protecting historic apartment buildings citywide, will speak about the history of apartment buildings. In January, Diana James, author of the 2012 book *Shared Walls: Seattle Apartment Buildings, 1900-1939*, will address the topic from her special point of view which includes the role of women in Seattle's design community especially as it relates to the history of apartment building design.

Also this summer the society proudly acknowledged a grant from 4Culture that gives us the funds to complete the digitalization of our collection of oral history tape recordings. Working with Jack Straw Cultural Center, we will provide online logs describing each of the recordings. The logs make the histories available to students, scholars, and the general community. When we get caught up on those recordings, it may be the right time to start a modern oral history project beginning, it has been suggested, with the authors of our book, *Community on the Hill*.

In June, the society conducted two tours. In addition to the traditional Mount Pleasant Cemetery Tour led by Kim Turner, Nicole Demers-Changelo, the chair of our tour committee, organized "Modern Queen Anne." Visiting five contemporary homes in the company of their architects turned out

to be a smashing idea. Supplemented by a visit to the interior of Canlis Restaurant and ending at the Swedish Club, another modern landmark, the tour attracted over 20 people. There is every hope of creating a similar tour for the society next June.

Thanks to a grant from 4Culture, the society began conversations about its long-range plans. The modern tour is one outcome. The slow replacement of a printed Cobblestone by an online version is a second. Publishing the Cobblestone and mailing it is one of the society's largest expenses and the most time-consuming activity for society volunteers. Emailing links to an online Cobblestone will make the newsletter prettier (it will be in color), cheaper to produce and more timely. People who wish to have the newsletter on paper will continue to receive it in that format.

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Kim's Musings: Part One

By Kim Turner, Chair of Research Committee

With our 2014/15 season tending toward the history and growth of modern architecture on Queen Anne Hill and vicinity, I get to look back at all that with which I grew up, from the mid-1940s onward. My sister and I stood on a glacial boulder at the foot of the steps at Third Avenue North in front of our house (910 3rd Ave. N.). The boulder had been unearthed by the steam shovels which were quickly removing the hillside across the street to make way for an apartment complex, brick fronts, and comfortable units. About the same time, I watched the razing of the old Mercer School, which made way for the Seattle Public Schools Administration Building, a beautiful and eye-catching structure with many windows and a flagstone entrance.

This was the summer and fall of 1946 and into 1947. As a three-year-old, I could walk down the hill to the corner and turn east on Aloha Street to watch the construction. They had two pile-drivers working together to fill in the

piles on which that building would stand. I liked the sounds and shapes of both pile drivers and steam shovels – I was an urban child without understanding what that concept meant.

Eventually both school offices and the apartment complex were finished. The apartments filled rapidly, and we had new friends—Barbara Hanel, Nancy Opliger, and Bonnie Cooper, the latter who went on through Warren Avenue Grade School and Queen Anne High School. The great white apartment complex which towers over Aurora about Crockett (north of Trolley Hill Park) was completed about 1950. These were some of the first "modern" housing units of which I saw under construction. Had I been another 10 years older, I would have had the pleasure of taking candid photos of the construction work and the eventual finished buildings. I can still remember the vacant lot on Third North where the apartments went up. Blackberry bushes grew right out to the

street. Much of our shopping in that era was done at the Fifth Avenue and Aloha stores. The Aloha Pharmacy, run by the Harrigers, was on the east side of the street on the corner, across from the shoemaker and to the north, from the Green Garden Pickle Factory.

Next to the pharmacy, which had a small soda fountain and the latest comic books, was Bigelow's Fine Foods, and a few doors down from that was a beauty salon. Across the street on the west side of Fifth was the shoe manufacturer and the Aloha Meat Market (1923-1973) run by the Swanson brothers and their families. Then access to the old house which had been lifted up and moved back from the street, then walled in by the meat market, the barber shop, and the Busy Bee grocery. On special occasions we would walk over to the Uptown district.

Look out for part two of Kim's Musings in the November issue of the Cobblestone!